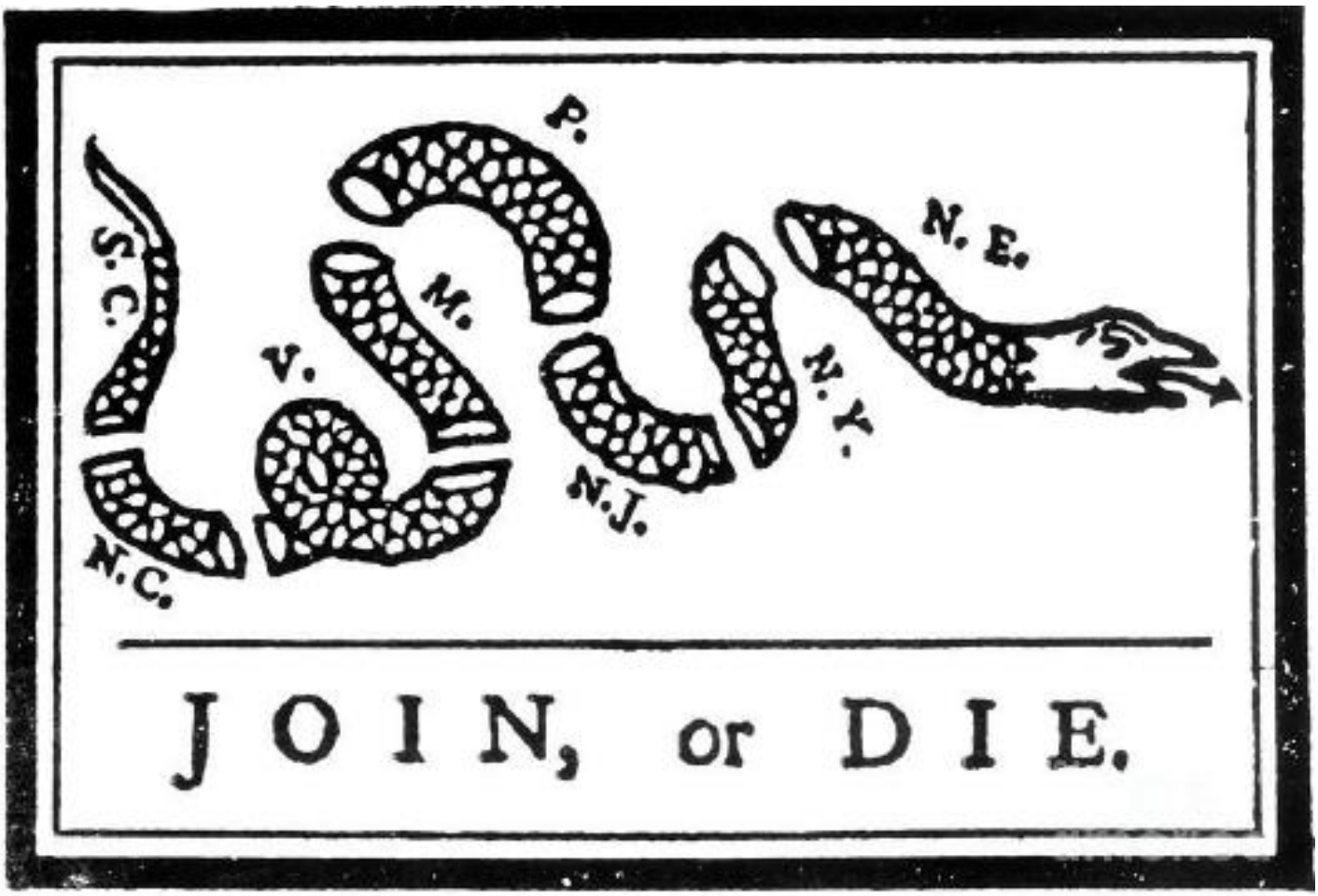
Albany Congress, 1754



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

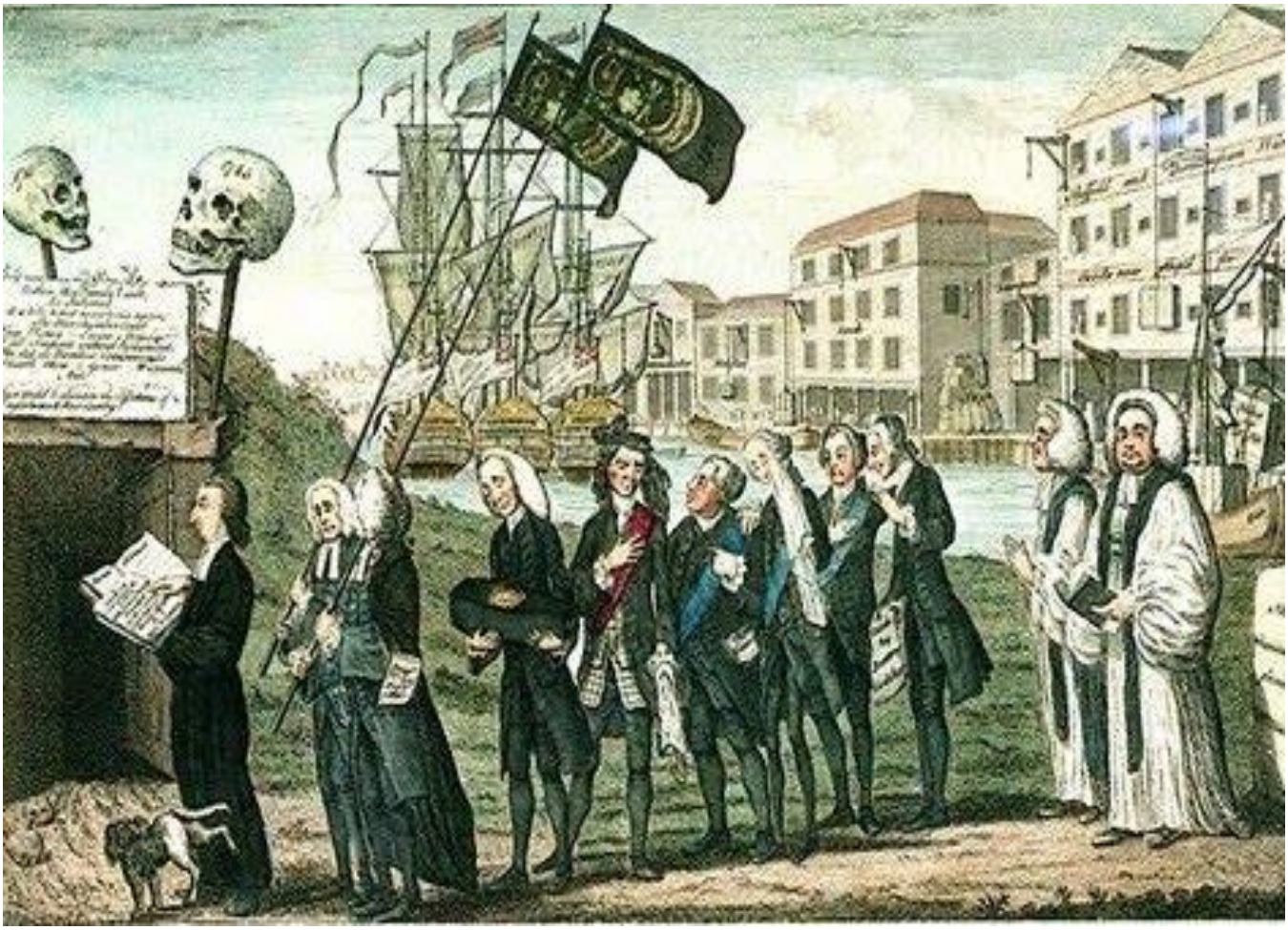
Representatives of seven colonies met in Albany to secure the allegiance of the Iroquois Confederacy, and to unite the colonies in matters of defense. Benjamin Franklin proposed the Albany Plan of Union, which provided for a congress of delegates representing all the colonies. England rejected it because each was unwilling to give up any of its powers of local government to a grand council.
This was America's first political cartoon, which appeared in Franklin's newspaper shortly after the Albany Congress. This drawing was based on the popular superstition that a snake that had been cut in two would come to life if the pieces were joined before sunset. This drawing immediately caught the public's eye and was reproduced in other newspapers.

Stamp Act, 1765

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

In 1765, upon George Grenville's recommendation, the British Parliament enacted the Stamp Act as a means of raising colonial tax revenues to help pay the cost of the French and Indian War in North America. The Stamp Act was the first direct tax imposed by Britain on its American colonies. This law placed a tax on newspapers, almanacs, pamphlets, playing cards, and legal documents.
The Colonists reacted immediately, asserting that the Stamp Act was an attempt to raise money in the colonies without the approval of colonial legislatures. Patrick Henry in the Virginia House of Burgesses stated "No Taxation without Representation". This became the slogan of the day. Patriotic societies, known as "The Sons of Liberty" were formed to organize resistance to the tax; resistance to the act was demonstrated through debates in the colonial legislatures, written documents (including legislative resolves, prints, and songs), and mob/crowd actions such as tarring and feathering tax collectors. Merchants pledged to halt the import of British goods, and the people vowed to stop buying English products until the tax was repealed.

Stamp Act Repealed, 1766



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

England was disturbed over the violent colonial opposition to the stamp tax. English merchants suffered severely from the colonial boycott of English goods. Therefore, Parliament in 1766 repealed the stamp tax but, at the same time, asserted its right to tax the colonies. Parliament had full authority over the colonies "in all cases whatsoever."

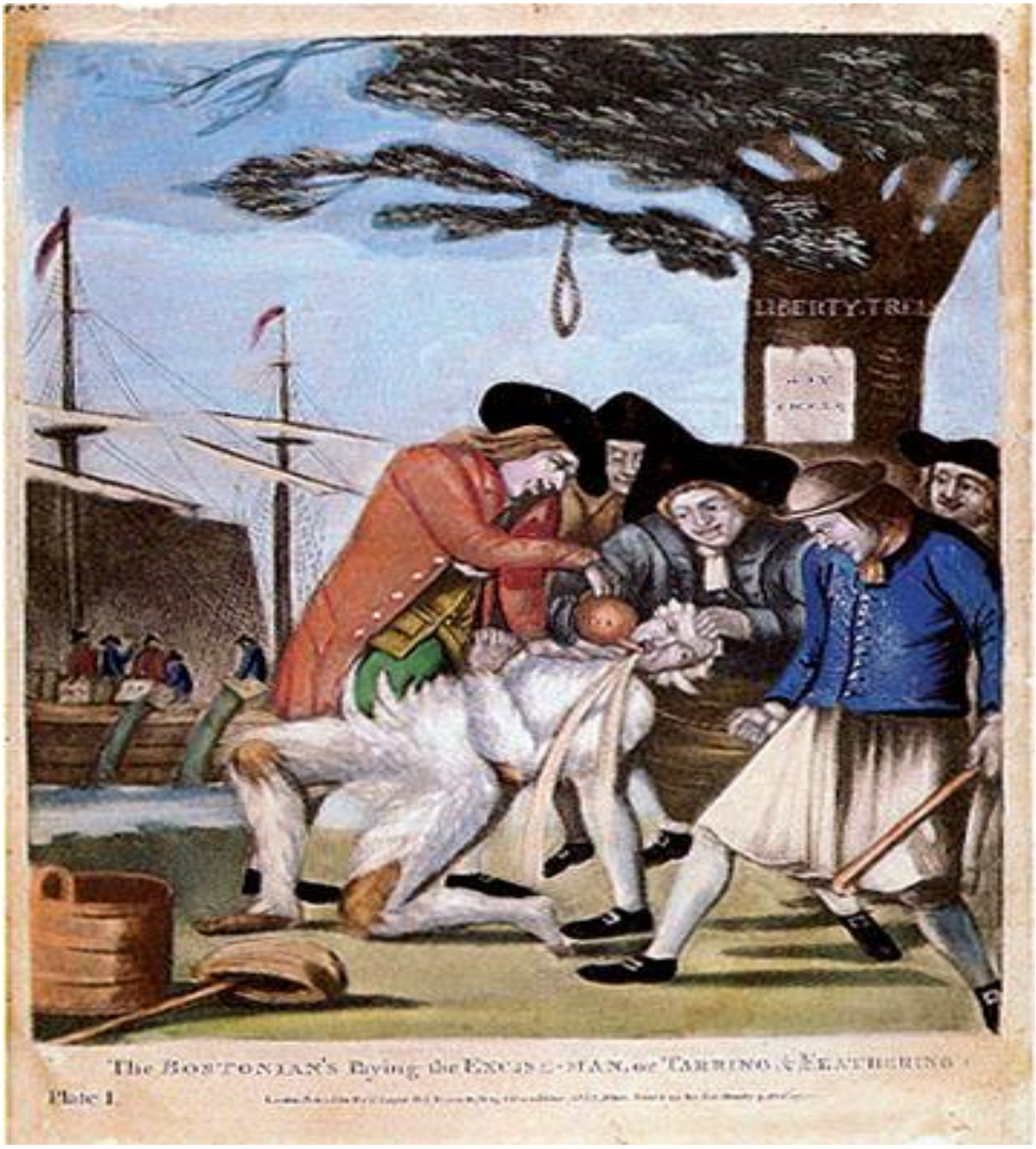
Boston Massacre, 1770

Paul Revere's print of "The Bloody Massacre perpetrated in King Street" in Boston, March 5, 1770. Three weeks after the occurrence, Revere was advertising his prints for sale in Boston's newspapers. Revere's historic engraving is long on political propaganda and short on accuracy. Patriotic propaganda like this called the incident a massacre to stir up feelings against the British government.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The people of Boston threatened and harmed British customs officials trying to collect taxes. So, the British quartered troops in Boston to protect their officials (Quartering Acts). In Boston, as elsewhere, there were bitter feelings between the colonists and the redcoats, the British troops. On one occasion, a riotous crowd of Bostonians shouted insults and threw snowballs at a detachment of soldiers. The redcoats fired into the mob, killing five townspeople and wounding six others. The angry citizens, led by Samuel Adams, demanded the removal of the British troops. To prevent an uprising, the governor withdrew the soldiers from the city. News of the massacre spread throughout the colonies and aroused hatred everywhere.

Boston Tea Party, 1773

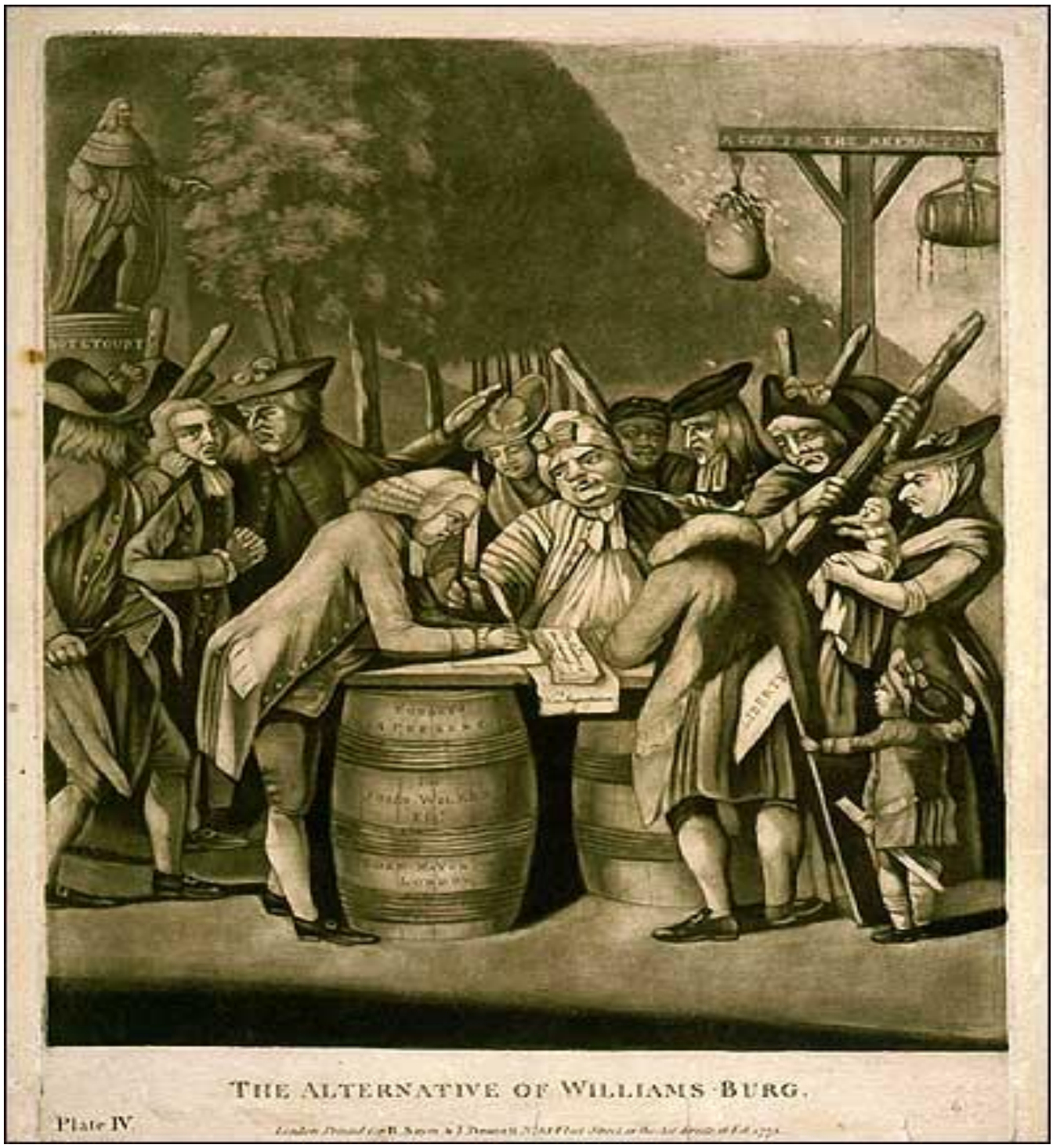


HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The British East Indian Company was in financial distress, partly as a result of the colonial boycott of English tea. To save the company from ruin, Parliament passed the Tea Act, which allowed the company to ship tea to America without paying the existing heavy duty in England. This allowed the company to sell the tea more cheaply than the colonial importers of English tea as well as the smugglers of foreign tea. This would ruin many American tea merchants.

In many American ports, the colonists boycotted the tea. It was either sent back to England, or locked up in warehouses and left to rot. In Boston, with the encouragement of The Sons of Liberty, the citizens refused to permit the unloading of three tea ships. During the night of December 16, 1773, the Boston Tea Party took place. Bostonians disguised as Indians boarded the ships and dumped 342 chests (worth $75,000) into the harbor.

Intolerable Acts, 1774



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Parliament moved quickly to punish Massachusetts for the Boston Tea Party and to reassert its authority over the colonies. It passed a series of acts that the colonists called "intolerable." This political cartoon shows colonial protest against the Intolerable Acts. In August of 1774, the Williamsburg Resolutions were passed. Virginians were urged to sign a pledge of loyalty to the Continental Congress and to stop the export of tobacco to England, the colonies' major and most profitable crop, until all taxes on imported goods were repealed.